


## City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 6, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: 2005 COMCAST CABLE COMMUNICATIONS, INC. ANNUAL SUBSCRIBER SURVEY REPORT

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**ISSUE:** Receipt of the 2005 Comcast Cable Communications, Inc. (Comcast) Annual Subscriber Survey Report.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council receive the 2005 Annual Subscriber Survey Report from Comcast. The Commission on Information Technology monitored the survey interviews during its July 11 meeting, reviewed the results of the Comcast 2005 Subscriber Survey report at its November 14 meeting, and approved the staff analysis.

**DISCUSSION:** Section 9-3-1532 (b) of the City Code requires the cable television franchisee to conduct an annual cable subscriber survey for the purpose of evaluating the degree of subscriber satisfaction with Comcast's cable television service and identifying whether the cable-related needs and interests of the community are being met. The 2005 cable subscriber survey was administered via telephone to 820 Alexandria City cable subscribers, compared to 803 in 2004. The survey was conducted by Q7 Broadband Market Research, a provider of marketing and teleservices based in Northern Virginia.

This year's survey showed that subscribers continue to have a high level of satisfaction with the quality of service offered by Comcast. Highlights of the 2005 survey findings follow.

Survey Sampling Procedure

Q7 Broadband Market Research's staff interviewed 820 cable television subscribers from July 11 to July 18. The respondents were randomly selected from the Comcast billing database of 49,710 Alexandria cable subscribers. The report indicates that the margin of error in the survey is plus or minus 3.40 percent, which means that the survey instrument and the methodology used to conduct the survey can be relied on to produce responses that are accurate at least 95 percent of the time.

Cable Subscriber Survey Results

Overall subscriber awareness of the availability of the public access (PEG) channels which are community (Channel 69), governmental (Channel 70), and educational (Channels 71, 72 and 73) increased significantly from 38 percent (308 of 803) in 2004 to 70% (572 of 820) in 2005.

Respondents indicated that the biggest obstacles to watching more programs on the PEG channels were (a) lack of interest in topics - 38 percent, (b) lack of program listing info - 29 percent, (c) technical quality of programs - 21 percent, and (d) other reasons - 12 percent.

Over the next year, staff will work with Comcast and ITS staff to ensure that all segments of the community are aware of the government programming. We will work with ITS staff to add the schedule of government-related programs cablecast on Channel 69 to the City's website (currently we only list Channel 70/government access programming), and investigate a link between the new message board system (for Government Bulletin Board on Channel 70) and the City's website, so that web users can see the message board at all times. Staff will also include the cablecast schedule in FYI Alexandria.

Thirty-two percent (262 of 820) of the total respondents reported watching Channel 69/Comcast Cable TV (Alexandria Community Channel), an increase from last year's 28 percent. Respondents who indicated that they watched Channel 69 programming expressed interest in the following:

- Local High School Sports - 45 percent (369 of 820); up significantly from the 25 percent (76 of 308) in 2004.
- Civic Informational Shows - 49.5 percent (406 of 820); down significantly from 75 percent (229 of 308) in 2004, although the overall number is much higher.
- Entertainment Shows - 59.9 percent (491 of 820); up significantly from 31 percent (95 of 308) in 2004.
- Local Current Events - 65.1 percent (534 of 820); up from 52 percent (159 of 308) in 2004.

With respect to Channel 70 Government Access Programming, 56.5 percent (323 of the 572 respondents who indicated they were aware of the public access channels) said that they watched Channel 70 programming, up from 51.3 percent in 2004. Of those who watched government programming:

- 74.9 percent (242 of 323) had watched a City Council meeting, slightly down from 79.7 percent (126 of 158) in 2004;
- 44.6 percent (144 of 323) watched a Saturday City Council public hearing, down from 48.7 percent (77 of 158) in 2004;
- 53.3 percent (172 of 323) watched a Planning Commission meeting, down from 62 percent (98 of 158) in 2004;
- 49.5 percent (160 of 323) watched a Board of Zoning Appeals meeting, down from 51.9 percent (81 of 158) in 2004;

- 40.2 percent (130 of 323) watched a Board of Architectural Review - Old and Historic District meeting, down from 46.8 percent (74 of 158) in 2004;
- 37.2 percent (120 of 323) watched a Board of Architectural Review - Parker-Gray District meeting, down from 41.1 percent (65 of 158) in 2004;
- 53.6 percent (173 of 323) watched an Alexandria School Board meeting. Please note that 26 percent of the total survey respondents reported having children enrolled in the Alexandria public school system (213 of 820). Last year, 58.9 percent (93 of 158) had watched a School Board meeting with only 16.3 percent of the total survey respondents having children enrolled in the Alexandria public school system.

When polled, subscriber interest in programming that highlights City services, programs and/or projects, was 42.2 percent (346 of 820) in 2005, up from 18.8 percent (151 of 803) in 2004.

Of the 55.4 percent (454 of 820) of subscribers who handled their cable TV problems via telephone, 85.7 percent (389 of 454) reported that Comcast's customer service personnel response was timely, which is up from 85.3 percent in 2004, and 93 percent (422 of 454) felt the service was courteous, which is the same percentage as in 2004. Subscriber problems were resolved and/or questions answered by Comcast staff in 86.3 percent of the cases (392 of 454 respondents), which is up from 71.9 percent of the respondents in 2004.

More respondents visited Comcast's Van Dorn Street office in 2005, 60.4 percent (495 of 820) compared to 35.9 percent (288 of 803) in 2004. According to Ms. Schuler, the primary reason for visiting the facility remains bill payment.

Subscriber satisfaction levels with regard to the cable system itself remain high, although slightly lower than it was in 2004. Using a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning "extremely dissatisfied" and 5 meaning "extremely satisfied," the majority of the respondents were generally satisfied with all of the following:

- Installation of cable in their home - 4.09, down from 2004's result of 4.3.
- Picture quality - 4.08, down from 2004's result of 4.4
- Sound quality - 4.07, down from 2004's result of 4.4
- Response to inquiries - 3.96, down from 4.3 in 2004
- Number of channels - 4.11, down from 2004's 4.4
- Overall customer satisfaction - 4.07, down from 2004's result of 4.4

To determine the accessibility of Comcast and its equipment for subscribers with disabilities, seven questions were posed to survey respondents, four more questions than were posed in 2004. Eight percent (66 of 820) reported a person in the household having a hearing or vision disability, which is up from 4.7 percent (38 of 803) over last year. Of those 66 respondents, 47 percent (31 of 66)

reported a mobile, manual or dexterity impairment; 64.5 percent (20 of 31) indicated problems in their ability to access and/or change channels, and 54.8 percent (17 of 31) reported problems in their ability to discuss bills with Comcast. 29 of the 31 respondents (94 percent) indicated that their ability to find a listing of cable programming was impaired. It should be noted that Comcast is equipped with a telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY), and has channel and program guides in Braille and large print for the visually impaired. Staff continually works with Comcast to address other issues affecting the accessibility of Comcast and its equipment for disabled subscribers.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** None

**ATTACHMENT:** Comcast Cable Communications 2005 Annual Cable Television  
Subscriber Survey Report and Survey Form

**STAFF:**  
Rose Williams Boyd, Director of Citizen Assistance  
Jacqueline Levy, Cable Television Administrator



## Comcast ALEXANDRIA Customer Surveys

**820 Total Surveys****SECTION ONE - BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1). What is the major reason you subscribe to cable television at this time?

53.4%	438	1 MORE CHANNELS
6.6%	54	2 MOVIES
26.0%	213	3 BETTER RECEPTION
7.2%	59	4 PREMIUM SERVICES
5.6%	46	5 SPORTS
1.2%	10	6 OTHER
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

**SECTION TWO - ACCESS CHANNELS**

1). Were you previously aware of these channels?

69.8%	572	1 YES
30.2%	248	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

**SECTION TWO - ACCESS CHANNELS**

Channel 70 is the local government access channel which provides brief announcements about upcoming government meetings and events, and broadcasts live City Council meetings, Planning Commission meetings, Board of Zoning Appeals meetings, and Board of Architectural Review meetings. Do you watch Channel 70 programming?

56.5%	323	1 YES
43.5%	249	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>572</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>



## SECTION TWO - ACCESS CHANNELS

2a). Have you ever watched an Alexandria City Council meeting?

74.9%	242	1 YES
25.1%	81	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>323</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION TWO - ACCESS CHANNELS

2b). Have you ever watched a Saturday public hearing?

44.6%	144	1 YES
55.4%	179	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>323</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION TWO - ACCESS CHANNELS

2c). Have you ever watched a Planning Commission meeting?

53.3%	172	1 YES
46.7%	151	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>323</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION TWO - ACCESS CHANNELS

2d). Have you ever watched a Board of Zoning Appeals meeting?

49.5%	160	1 YES
50.5%	163	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>323</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>



## SECTION TWO - ACCESS CHANNELS

2e). Have you ever watched a Board of Architectural Review - Old and Historic District meeting?

40.2%	130	1 YES
59.8%	193	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>323</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION TWO - ACCESS CHANNELS

2f). Have you ever watched a Board of Architectural Review - Parker-Gray District meeting?

37.2%	120	1 YES
62.8%	203	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>323</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION TWO - ACCESS CHANNELS

2g). Have you ever watched a School Board meeting?

53.6%	173	1 YES
46.4%	150	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>323</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION TWO - ACCESS CHANNELS

3). Would you be interested in specific programming which highlights City services, programs and/or projects?

42.2%	346	1 YES
57.8%	474	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>



## SECTION TWO - ACCESS CHANNELS

- Channels 71, 72, and 73 are the educational access channels. Channel 72 broadcasts telecourses from Northern Virginia Community College. Channel 73 broadcasts telecourses from George Mason University and Channel 71 for cable ready TVs is used by the Alexandria City Public School system.
- 4).

- 4a). Have you ever watched the telecourses sponsored by Northern Virginia Community College?

34.1%	280	1 YES
65.9%	540	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	820	Total Responses

## SECTION TWO - ACCESS CHANNELS

- 4b). Have you ever watched the telecourses sponsored by George Mason University?

32.2%	264	1 YES
67.8%	556	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	820	Total Responses

## SECTION TWO - ACCESS CHANNELS

- 4c). Have you ever watched any of the programming sponsored by the Alexandria City Public Schools?

39.1%	321	1 YES
60.9%	499	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	820	Total Responses





## SECTION TWO - ACCESS CHANNELS

4d). Do you presently have children enrolled in the Alexandria Public School System?

26.5%	217	1 YES
73.5%	603	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION TWO - ACCESS CHANNELS

4e). Instructional programming can also be seen on MHZ2/Channel 25. Have you ever watched instructional programming sponsored by MHZ2/Channel 25?

31.1%	255	1 YES
68.9%	565	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION THREE - COMCAST COMMUNITY TELEVISION CHANNEL 69

Comcast produces local programming as a public service to Alexandrians. These programs are shown on Channel 69 in the evenings during the week and on the weekends.

## SECTION THREE - COMCAST COMMUNITY TELEVISION CHANNEL 69

1). Have you ever watched the programming on Channel 69?

32.0%	262	1 YES
68.0%	558	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>



## SECTION THREE - COMCAST COMMUNITY TELEVISION CHANNEL 69

- 2). Have you ever watched the Community Bulletin Board on Channel 69 from 10:00 am to 5:30 am daily?

49.1%	403	1 YES
50.9%	417	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION THREE - COMCAST COMMUNITY TELEVISION CHANNEL 69

- 3). Are you interested in any of the following categories of programming that are currently shown on Channel 69?

## SECTION THREE - COMCAST COMMUNITY TELEVISION CHANNEL 69 - INTEREST

- Local high school sports?  
3a).

45.0%	369	1 YES
55.0%	451	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION THREE - COMCAST COMMUNITY TELEVISION CHANNEL 69 - INTEREST

- 3b). Civic/Informational Shows?

49.5%	406	1 YES
50.5%	414	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION THREE - COMCAST COMMUNITY TELEVISION CHANNEL 69 - INTEREST

- 3c). Entertainment Shows?

59.9%	491	1 YES
40.1%	329	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>



## SECTION THREE - COMCAST COMMUNITY TELEVISION CHANNEL 69 - INTEREST

## 3d). Current Local Events?

65.1%	534	1 YES
34.9%	286	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION THREE - COMCAST COMMUNITY TELEVISION CHANNEL 69

## 3aa). What are the biggest obstacles to your watching more programs on the PEG channels?

20.73%	170	1 TECHNICAL QUALITY OF PROGRAMS
38.29%	314	2 LACK OF INTEREST IN TOPICS
28.66%	235	3 LACK OF PROGRAM LISTING INFO
12.32%	101	4 OTHER
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION THREE - COMCAST COMMUNITY TELEVISION CHANNEL 69

## 3bb). Have you ever considered producing a show on the Community Channel?

24.5%	201	1 YES
75.5%	619	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION THREE - COMCAST COMMUNITY TELEVISION CHANNEL 69

## 3cc). Are you aware that Comcast conducts Community Programming Volunteer Operations classes in television production for a nominal fee?

24.6%	202	1 YES
75.4%	618	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>



## SECTION THREE - COMCAST COMMUNITY TELEVISION CHANNEL 69

3dd). Would you be interested in taking such a class?

30.5%	250	1 YES
69.5%	570	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION FOUR - SERVICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

1). Have you ever called the cable company for any reason other than initiating service?

55.4%	454	1 YES
44.6%	366	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION FOUR - SERVICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

1a). Was your call answered within a reasonable period of time?

85.7%	389	1 YES
14.3%	65	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>454</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION FOUR - SERVICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

1b). Was the person with whom you spoke courteous?

93.0%	422	1 YES
7.0%	32	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>454</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>



## SECTION FOUR - SERVICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

1c). Was your question or problem resolved?

86.3%	392	1 YES
13.7%	62	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>454</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION FOUR - SERVICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

1d). Have you ever visited the local Comcast Office?

60.4%	495	1 YES
39.6%	325	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION FOUR - SERVICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

1e). Were you satisfied with the quality of service you received?

89.6%	735	1 YES
10.4%	85	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>820</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION FOUR - SERVICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

Using a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning "extremely dissatisfied" and 5 meaning "extremely satisfied," please select the number that best represents your satisfaction with the following customer service aspects of the system.

2).

4.093	a).	INSTALLATION OF CABLE IN YOUR HOME
4.085	b).	PICTURE QUALITY
4.077	c).	SOUND QUALITY
3.957	d).	RESPONSE TO INQUIRIES OR PROBLEMS
4.105	e).	NUMBER OF CHANNELS PROVIDED
4.073	f).	OVERALL CUSTOMER SERVICE



## SECTION FIVE - PROGRAMMING SURVEY

- 1a). Are there any channels that are not presently offered that you or others in your household would like to see added to our system?

20.6%	169	1 YES
79.4%	651	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	820	Total Responses

## SECTION FIVE - PROGRAMMING SURVEY

- 1b). If yes, which channel(s) would you like to see added to the system?  
PLEASE SEE DATA SHEET

## SECTION FIVE - PROGRAMMING SURVEY

- 1c). If Comcast added the new channels that you would like to see, would you be willing to pay more for the service?

46.7%	79	1 YES
53.3%	90	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	169	Total Responses

## SECTION SIX - ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY

- 1). Are there any persons in your household with hearing or vision disabilities which interfere with their enjoyment of cable TV?

8.0%	66	1 YES
92.0%	754	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	820	Total Responses



## SECTION SIX - ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY

- 2). Are there any persons in your household with mobile, manual or dexterity impairments that would interfere with their ability to use cable TV controls?

47.0%	31	1 YES
53.0%	35	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>66</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION SIX - ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY

- 3). Have any of these disabilities or impairments affected this person's ability to:

## SECTION SIX - ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY

- 3a). Access/change channels on cable?

64.5%	20	1 YES
35.5%	11	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>31</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION SIX - ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY

- 3b). Discuss a bill with Comcast?

54.8%	17	1 YES
45.2%	14	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>31</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION SIX - ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY

- 3c). Find out what programming is on cable?

93.5%	29	1 YES
6.5%	2	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>31</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>



## SECTION SIX - ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY

3d). Understand the dialog on programs?

54.8%	17	1 YES
45.2%	14	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>31</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

## SECTION SIX - ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY

3e). Follow the program on cable?

51.6%	16	1 YES
48.4%	15	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>31</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

**SECTION FOUR - SERVICE TO SUBSCRIBERS**

1e). Were you satisfied with the quality of service you received?

\*\*\*\*PARSED TO THE 495 ACTUAL VISITORS IN Sec 4 1D.

94.3%	467	1 YES
5.7%	28	2 NO
0.0%	0	0 DK/NA/OA
	<b>495</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>